

2. TRANSPORTATION

Gaining Access to, Along, and Across the River

Common Citizen Concerns

- Inadequate access to waterfront parklands from neighborhoods.
- Highways create barriers to open space and recreation.
- Bridges have been designed to discourage local traffic and pedestrians.
- Regional traffic crowds local boulevards.

Actions

- **Construct 20 miles of Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail** with three new pedestrian and bike crossings at Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens, Massachusetts Avenue, and the Washington Channel.
- **Create the new Waterfront Light Rail Line**
- **Connect regional traffic from I-395 to I-295 and Suitland Parkway** via a new tunnel under South Capitol Street.
- **Replace the existing Frederick Douglass Bridge** at South Capitol Street with a new river crossing that creates a grand gateway to the Capitol and accommodates local traffic and pedestrians.
- **Rebuild the 11th Street Bridges** as local bridges to improve neighborhood connections across the river.
- **Extend main streets**, including MLK Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, and Benning Road, from neighborhood centers east of the river to the waterfront.
- **Extend neighborhood streets**, including Howard Road, W Street, Good Hope Road, 16th Street, and Naylor Road, to the waterfront.
- **Transform Anacostia Freeway into a green parkway** to slow traffic and introduce scenic elements.
- **Create a new park road at the Hill East waterfront** for access to the RiverParks and Riverwalk to ensure a safe waterfront environment.

Transportation is a dominant force in the shaping of cities, and for the Anacostia waterfront it has been a negative force. The Anacostia is cut off from the neighborhoods around it by a regional highway system whose function was never to connect the city and the river, but only to get people over the river to points farther away. While the Potomac's monumental bridges and well-used trails create a memorable and engaging waterfront, the Anacostia's highway-like bridges and crumbling trails make getting to the waterfront almost impossible. The area suffers the consequences of favoring regional mobility over neighborhood accessibility and livability.

The Anacostia must be unburdened of its barriers and made into a safe, accessible public resource for all to enjoy. Its river crossings should serve as extensions of city streets, allowing pedestrians and cars to easily travel among neighborhoods and the waterfront's many attractions. Fortunately, the aging infrastructure requires major repair, reconstruction, or replacement – an opportunity for recovery.

The highway system, introduced in the mid-20th century, is not the only impediment keeping residents and visitors away from the river. Public transit is inadequate near the waterfront, especially in light of new development rapidly occurring along the river corridor. Pedestrians have few convenient routes to the river or continuous trails along the waterfront. Bridges over the Anacostia are few, generally absent of pedestrian amenities, and without connections between local streets and the waterfront. Streets that should link neighborhoods and neighborhood commercial centers to the waterfront instead block access to the river and its parks.

As our highway-building era demonstrated, transportation solutions can impede as well as catalyze urbanity. The next investments in infrastructure along the Anacostia must be multi-modal examples of well-designed public works to ensure a higher quality of life for all. While there will always be a need to maintain current traffic capacities, the AWI Framework Plan seeks to improve the overall transportation system with a multi-pronged approach that promotes access to, across, and along the river:

- 1 All activities along the waterfront must be linked by the Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail. This multi-use trail system serves both as an alternative mode of regional transportation and as the spine of the RiverParks network of green open spaces, intended to create continuous, safe access to public lands along the river.
- 2 Public transportation must be enhanced and increased to afford more residents direct access to the Anacostia River and its neighborhoods. A waterfront light-rail line is central to this vision.
- 3 The bridges across the Anacostia River must be designed in the tradition of great civic architecture and must allow for bicycle and pedestrian access that is easy, attractive, and enjoyable.
- 4 The highways and freeways that frame the Anacostia River must be transformed to become less of a physical and visual barrier to the waterfront and adjacent neighborhoods. Selected segments should be lowered below grade to allow local streets direct access to the waterfront.
- 5 All streets and boulevards that lead to the Anacostia River must be multi-modal and designed in the tradition of great Washington boulevards. They should include appropriately scaled, mixed-use densities, street trees and landscaping, and great civic spaces as they reach the water's edge.

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THE TRANSPORTATION AGENDA

The AWI Transportation Agenda reconsiders the design of transportation infrastructure in order to gain access to waterfront lands and to better serve waterfront neighborhoods. People must be able to get to the waterfront using accessible public transportation, beautiful streets, and distinctive bridges that become gateways to the Anacostia RiverParks.



“ Our commercial corridors – H Street, Georgia Avenue, MLK Avenue, New York Avenue, and all of Pennsylvania Avenue – must be the arteries of this city, carrying us from one neighborhood to another, and pumping new life into communities too long ignored.”

Mayor Anthony A. Williams, State of the District Address 2002

Smart Growth

- Promote Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) to reduce regional commuting.
- Reduce land designated for highways and return to productive urban land uses.
- Reduce surface parking wherever feasible.
- Introduce incentives for bicycle commuting, including bike racks and showers in new developments.

Waterfront Access

- Restore the city grid to extend to the waterfront.
- Mitigate regional transportation impacts on local neighborhoods.
- Provide exclusive bike lanes on roadways, and build the Riverwalk.
- Improve and increase the number of pedestrian under/overpasses on highways.

Streets and Streetscapes

- Minimize visual and physical impacts of railroad and highway infrastructure.
- Incorporate place-making and public art along roadways and inside traffic circles.
- Encourage parkway-standard design, materials, and signage on roads and bridges.
- Promote landscaping design in all roadway projects.

Inter-Modal Transit

- Promote inter-modal opportunities at key activity centers.
- Maximize use of existing waterfront Metro stations.
- Introduce light-rail and water-taxi service to the waterfront.
- Promote the Riverwalk as a transportation/commuting alternative.

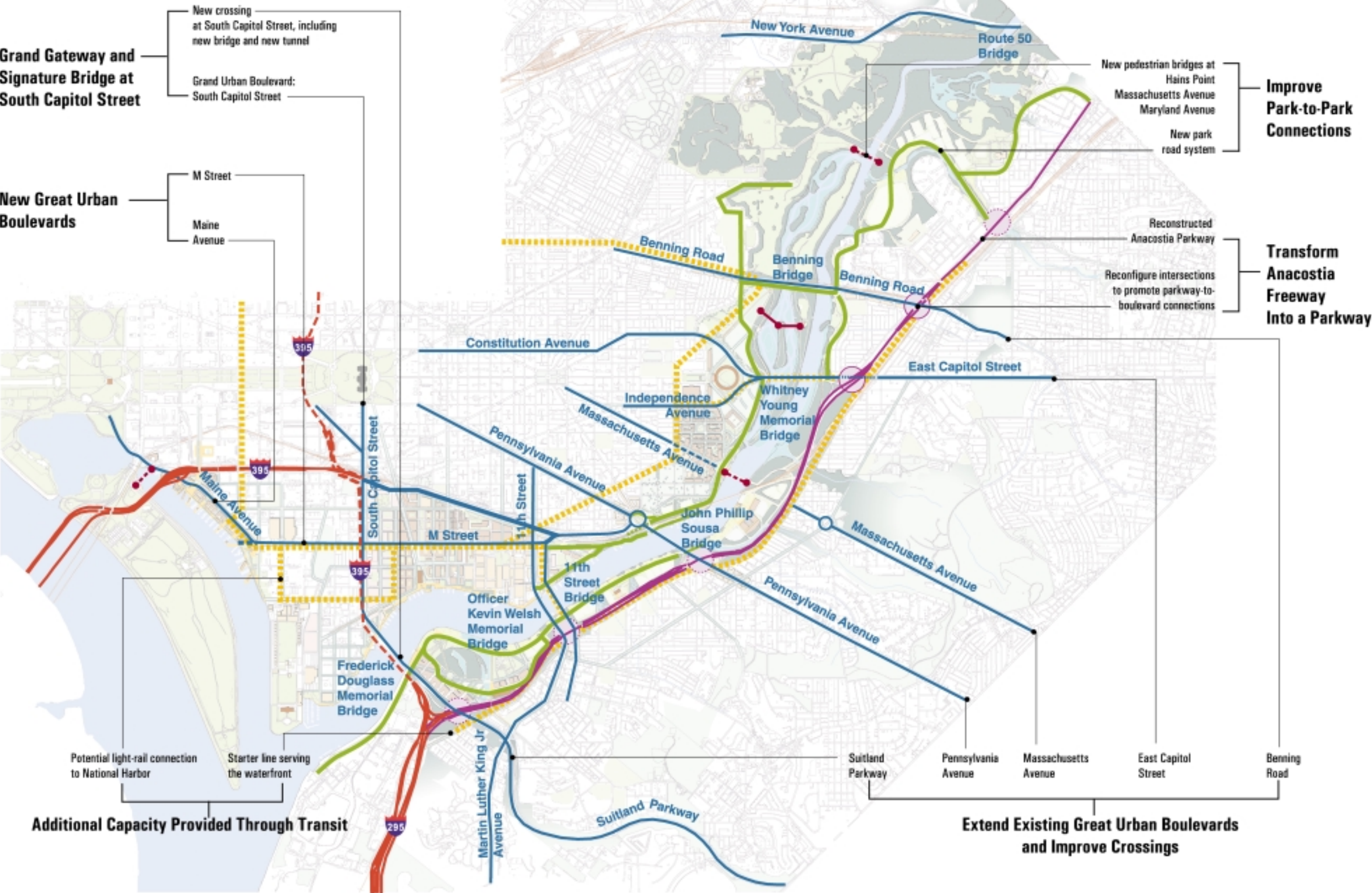
River Crossings

- Promote pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access on all bridges.
- Increase the number of bridge crossings to enhance the efficiency of the traffic network.
- Lower the height of bridges wherever possible.

Sustainable Design

- Minimize all impervious surfaces.
- Mitigate the urban heat-island effect through roadway landscaping.
- Introduce sustainable design regulations and incentives for roadway design.

THE TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES MAP



Transportation for the Next Century

“The first step in getting people out of their cars is to provide alternatives.”

An Emphasis on Alternative Transit Modes



Boston Harbor Ferry.



Light-rail in Boston, Massachusetts.



Biking can be a faster and more effective mode of commuting than driving.



Washington must work to find alternate modes of transportation for commuting.

The Framework Plan replaces deteriorated and outmoded infrastructure with state-of-the-art transportation. In an era where transportation planning must encompass local livability issues, such as air pollution and neighborhood vitality, this opportunity could not be more advantageous. The planning of the AWI and Anacostia RiverParks will:

- **Better connect people to the Anacostia River and the new RiverParks system.**
- **Promote alternative modes of transportation, including, walking, bicycling, public transit, and water taxi, and ensure that these systems link to and support each other.**
- **Unburden the river and the nearby neighborhoods of the worst effects of interstate and freeway traffic.**
- **Take advantage of the imminent need to replace or rebuild aging roads and bridges by implementing innovative improvements.**

A New Transportation Model

Three objectives dominate the AWI's transportation agenda: improving and expanding public transit; supporting alternatives mode of transportation, such as walking and cycling, with trails; and directing regional traffic away from residential neighborhoods and local street systems.

The first two concerns cannot be fully addressed without first solving regional traffic patterns. Because the waterfront area is threaded with interstate highways, freeways, and congested parkways, any effort to improve transportation and livability at the local level requires an overhaul of this vast, incomplete, hard-to-navigate system. The redesign of the highway and street system will improve the experience of local residents, pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. In fact, waterfront neighborhoods will not be able to enjoy the economic, cultural, and recreational resources of the RiverParks and new, alternative transportation networks

without a redesign of the current highway and road system. Public transit can serve the waterfront in two vital ways. First, it will bring people to the waterfront and to the many proposed areas of development. Second, by keeping commuters off the highways and streets near the river, it will help reduce traffic congestion, pollution, and noise impacts on neighborhoods. Metro service to, through, and within the Anacostia Corridor should be expanded in ways that serve both residents and commuters.

Washington's Metrorail provides six stations serving neighborhoods along the Anacostia and connecting them to downtown. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) is studying transit-corridor expansions, including two potential light-rail corridors that will affect the Anacostia: one along the existing CSX Blue Plains spur line, parallel to the east bank of the river, and one along M Street, SW/SE, connecting the Southwest waterfront to the Southeast waterfront and RFK Stadium. Metrobus service along M Street already has been expanded to serve new development.

Water taxis will serve development on the shores of the Anacostia by connecting large employment centers and visitor destinations, such as the Navy Yard, the Southwest waterfront and a new Anacostia Park at Poplar Point. This service could begin by focusing on high-volume destinations and then expand to other locations to better integrate modes of transit, such as water-to-land connections from Metro and light-rail corridors.

Getting People Out of Their Cars

The first step in getting people out of their cars is to provide alternatives. Safe and convenient paths from neighborhoods to employment centers will increase use of alternative modes of transportation, such as walking and bicycling. As growth in the Washington area continues, transportation burdens on highways, roads, and Metro will increase. For residents along the Anacostia, pedestrian and bicycle path systems will provide alternative routes to jobs and leisure activities.

Park-and-Ride facilities along the Anacostia – such as at Poplar Point – have been lightly used in the past. More aggressive advertising and direct pedestrian connections to the Riverwalk will increase the attractiveness of these facilities. Metrorail should expand the ability of riders to bring bicycles onto trains to make cyclists part of a fully inter-modal system for recreation as well as commuting.

Modifying the Highways That Isolate the Anacostia and Divide the City

The Anacostia River historically has divided neighborhoods east of the river from the majority of employment opportunities in Washington. The city's northern and western suburbs extend along L'Enfant's numerous radial avenues, but the Anacostia blocks such extension to the southeast, limiting it to just three major crossings, at South Capitol Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, and East Capitol Street. Additional Crossings at 11th Street, Benning Road, and Route 50 (New York Avenue) increase the number of crossings to six, with a total of seven bridges. These bridges are insufficient to serve both the neighborhoods of the Anacostia River Corridor – where about a quarter of Washington's population lives – and the regional traffic that passes through the area from more distant suburbs.

The need for a regional highway system began with the growth of federal employment opportunities in the mid-20th century. That growth combined with suburban development patterns to increase commuter traffic. In 1940, the modestly scaled Suitland Parkway was built to connect Southeast neighborhoods and Andrews Air Force Base with the Capitol. After World War II the Anacostia Freeway was constructed along the southern shore of the river, to provide direct connections from Maryland to destinations such as the Navy Yard and downtown. In the 1960s, the Southeast (I-395) and Southwest Freeways were constructed as the first and only segments of a proposed downtown loop system (see 1955 Loop Freeway System map at left). The negative impacts of the Southeast/Southwest Freeways were so severe that public protests helped lead to the abandonment of the Washington interstate highway system loop project.



The "Inner Loop" Freeway System, as proposed in 1955 by the District of Columbia Department of Highways.



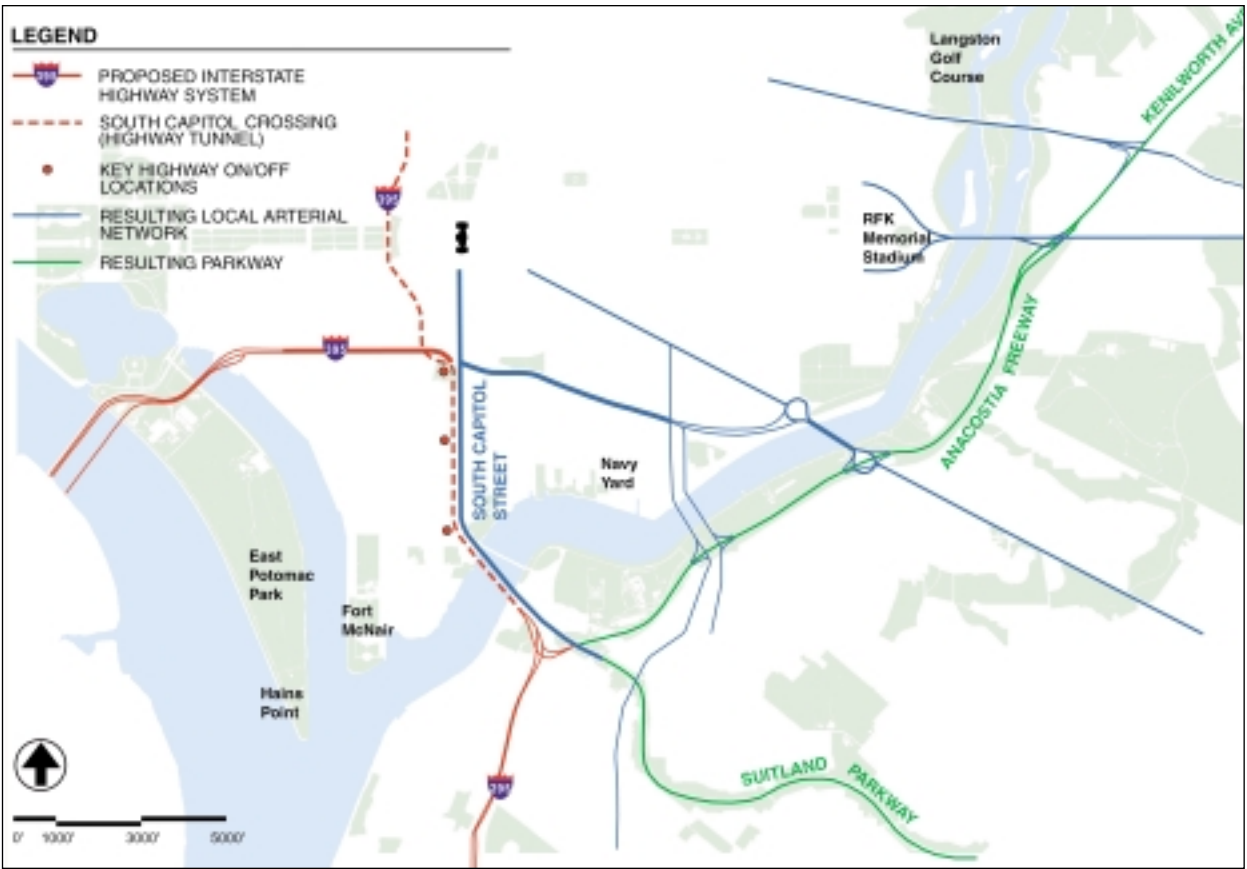
Existing highway conditions: an incomplete system spread over a large territory, compromising both local and regional traffic needs.

The Anacostia Freeway and the Southeast and Southwest Freeways provide urban interstate connections from the Baltimore- Washington Parkway and the Capital Beltway in Maryland to employment centers downtown and Arlington County, Virginia. About 400,000 cars now traverse the Anacostia on this interstate system, many originating in Maryland with destinations in Virginia.

This urban freeway system affects waterfront residents, bisects neighborhoods, and isolates residential areas from the river. The Southeast Freeway and its highway-like bridges at 11th Street have the unfortunate effect of sending regional highway traffic on a circuitous route through residential riverside neighborhoods. Regional traffic often spills into Capitol Hill neighborhoods when freeways become congested. Incomplete intersections on the Anacostia Freeway at Pennsylvania Avenue and the 11th Street Bridges have the unintended result of forcing regional drivers onto local streets, looking for the shortest routes.

The crossings at East Capitol Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, and 11th Street all carry large volumes of regional traffic, making them less desirable as neighborhood-to-neighborhood connections over the Anacostia. In the case of the 11th Street Bridges, no pedestrian accommodations were built at all, severing the most historic river crossing, which once connected Washington's oldest African-American neighborhood to the Navy Yard and the Capitol. On the remaining bridges, such as the Frederick Douglass and the Sousa bridges, pedestrians must struggle across narrow, inhospitable sidewalks next to high-speed traffic.

An Historic Opportunity to Rebuild the Regional Highway Network
Three of the seven bridge structures along the Anacostia will need significant repair or replacement within 10 years. The reconstruction of these spans at South Capitol and 11th Streets should redirect regional traffic away from neighborhoods and reconnect residents to the river and to each other across the Anacostia.



Recommended actions: Build a South Capitol Street Tunnel to clarify and consolidate highway traffic while removing commuter traffic from local roads.

The best opportunity to redirect regional traffic lies with the long-range redevelopment of the South Capitol Street corridor, which deserves to become a beautiful, ceremonial, vibrant, and mixed-use southern gateway to the Capitol. This transformation can be achieved only if much of the regional traffic that the corridor currently carries is redirected to a high-speed tunnel. Such a tunnel would more directly connect the Anacostia Freeway (I-295) and the Southwest Freeway (I-395). Regional traffic would travel from the Anacostia Freeway under the Anacostia River in the new tunnel, below South Capitol Street to I-395 at the Southwest Freeway. The Suitland Parkway approach to Washington would maintain its parkway quality, cross a new bridge at the Anacostia River, and move along a more boulevard-like South Capitol Street, lined with a mix of office, retail, and residential uses.

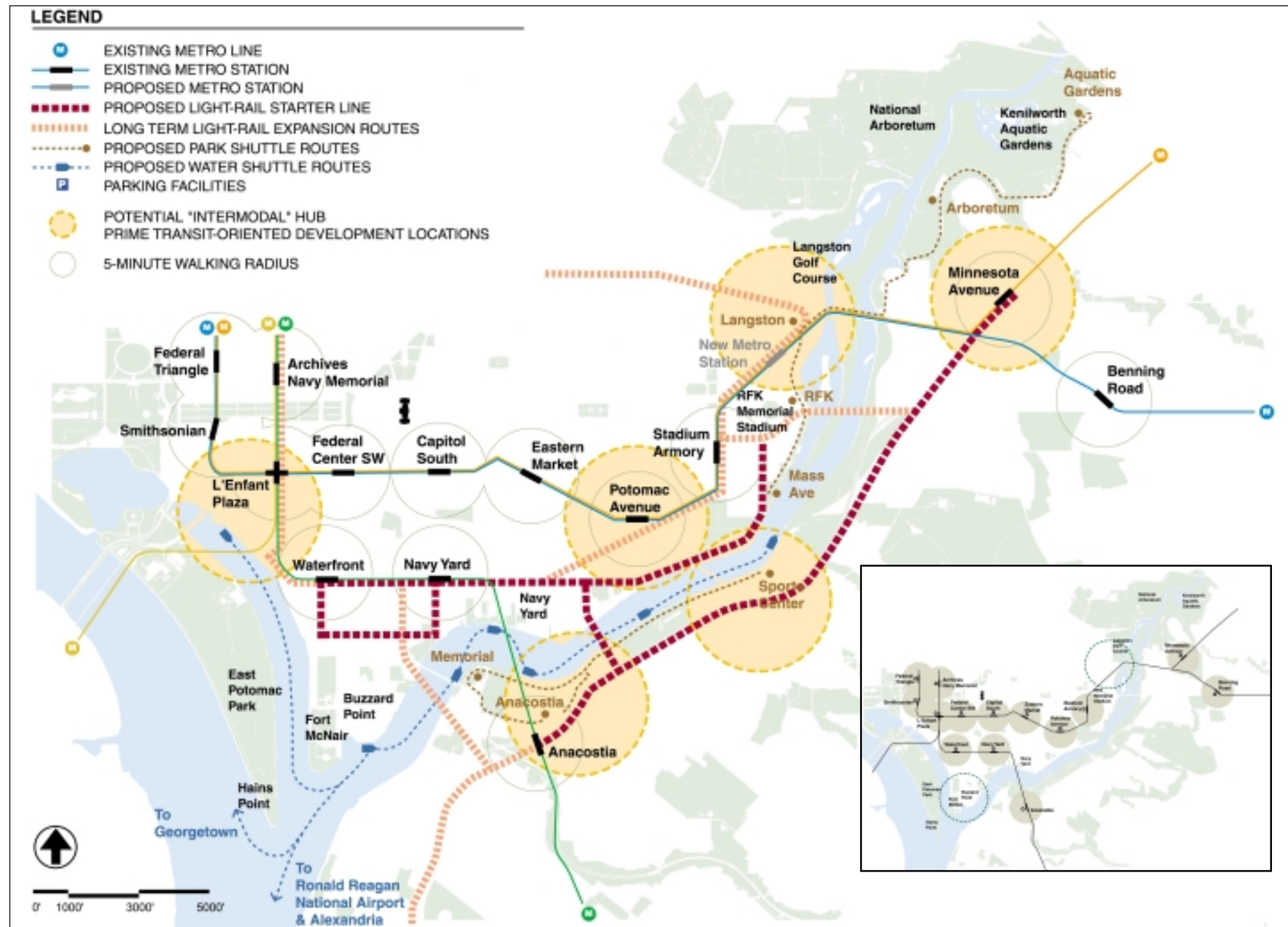
Redirecting regional traffic to a South Capitol Street tunnel would enable the eventual dismantling of the Southeast Freeway (I-295) along the alignment of Virginia Avenue.

Returning Virginia Avenue to a surface boulevard (with simultaneous burying of the CSX railroad line) would reunite Capitol Hill with the Anacostia waterfront and the Near Southeast neighborhood. Freeway (and railroad) structures over South Capitol Street could be removed to restore the view of the Capitol dome. Rerouting regional traffic from the 11th Street Bridges would allow these high-speed spans to be lowered and returned to pedestrian and local traffic use. Future light-rail alignments could then be accommodated on one or both bridges to serve Historic Anacostia.

A tunneled interstate connection along the South Capitol Street alignment will allow for traffic reduction at all river crossings and lead to lower vehicular speeds, wider sidewalks, added cycling lanes, and safer pedestrian crossings. Great boulevards such as Pennsylvania Avenue could thus be relieved of choking levels of regional traffic and be restored to provide retail shops and services for neighborhoods, and sites for new national monuments.

A Waterfront Better Served by Public Transportation

"Connections between light rail and other modes of transportation will be of utmost importance in solving Washington's transportation problems."



New Transit-Oriented Development Along the Anacostia

New light-rail lines should serve the proposed Buzzard Point mixed-use neighborhood, Carver-Langston neighborhood, and the golf course. Circles (inset) indicate areas under served by transit.

Washington's extensive Metrobus and Metrorail network serves District residents and commuters from Maryland and Virginia. The monumental core and downtown attract crowds of riders and are well served by the Metro system. The waterfront is also well served by Metro, but connections between the waterfront and Metro facilities are lacking.

Connecting the Waterfront and Metro Service

New public and private investment should strive to connect Metro stops to waterfront lands. Indeed, the pace of redevelopment will quicken with the prospect of better transit options, as has occurred on M Street, SE. Innovative light-rail service and water-taxi service will supplement the Metro system. Efficient inter-modal connections will require close coordination of all types of transit, supporting, not detracting from, the revitalization of waterfront lands.

The L'Enfant Promenade

The L'Enfant Promenade, ripe for improvements, will connect the Mall and Southwest Waterfront. A major museum or memorial of national significance – proposed for the waterfront terminus of the promenade at the 10th Street Overlook – will help catalyze improvements to the Promenade, which will in turn enhance pedestrian access to the waterfront from the L'Enfant Metro station (serving four of the city's five Metro lines). Public garage parking at this site will serve Maine Avenue, the Southwest waterfront, and new parks and development.

Public Transit at Buzzard Point

Recent zoning changes are paving the way for a vital mixed-use neighborhood at Buzzard Point, an area now under-served by transit. (See inset diagram to the left.) Light-rail lines will connect this area to multiple waterfront destinations, such as the Near Southeast neighborhood, the revitalized Southwest waterfront, and the new Poplar Point Park. Buzzard Point's location also lends itself to shuttle and water-taxi systems.

Metrorail at RFK

An additional Metro station at RFK Stadium (Orange and Blue Lines), to the north, would enhance the stadium's potential as a Park-and-Ride facility as well as serve future development or expansion of facilities. The stadium offers generous weekday parking capacity. If another station cannot be built, then an additional portal can be created, using underground walkways from the Stadium-Armory station to the surrounding areas, including the waterfront. Physical constraints and portal locations require further study.

Metrorail in the Southeast

Improved sidewalks along M Street, SE, will encourage employees in Near Southeast to ride Metro. A water-taxi station will make Near Southeast a true multi-modal transportation site, serving the Navy Yard and development at the Southeast Federal Center, and bringing visitors from across the river to the waterfront via the Anacostia Metro at Poplar Point. The Anacostia Metro station (Green Line) is separated from the waterfront by large parcels of underused land. The proposed park and cultural developments will be served by a new pedestrian walkway from the Metro station's entrance near the existing parking garage and, at the other end, by the Riverwalk.

Other opportunities for waterfront access via Metro include:

- A station entrance at the Waterfront-SEU station (Green Line) closer to Maine Avenue and the Southwest waterfront.
- A station entrance at the Potomac Avenue station (Blue and Orange Lines) closer to the waterfront.

Light Rail

Light rail is a state-of-the-art strategy in Washington's efforts to reduce auto congestion and pollution. The District of Columbia has studied the possibility of using light-rail service to supplement Metro service along nine potential corridors, five of which lie near the underserved Anacostia waterfront. Connections between light rail and other modes of transportation – such as the water-taxi system, the Riverwalk, and other bicycle and pedestrian corridors – will be of utmost importance in solving Washington's transportation problems,

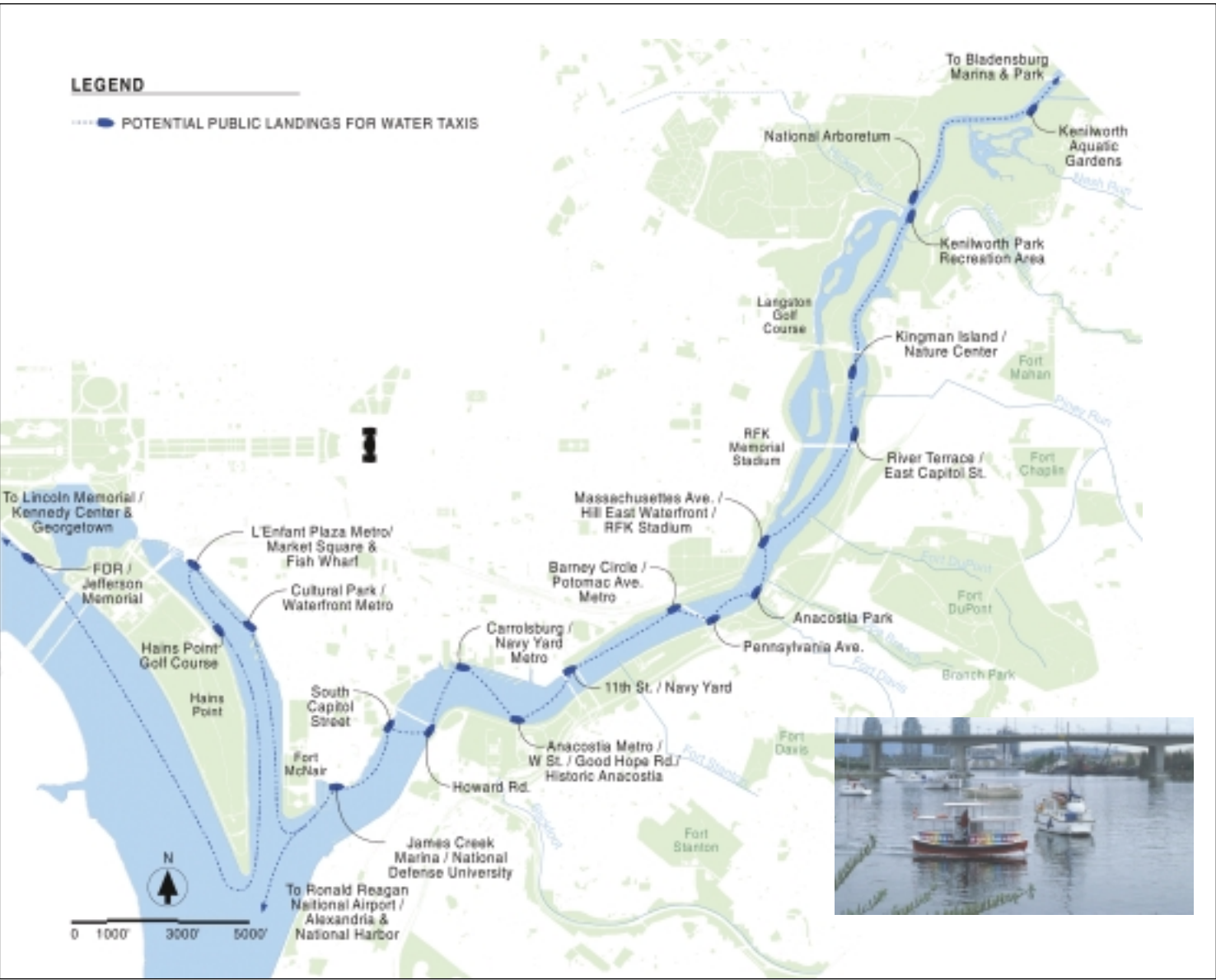
improving the quality of the city's air, and enhancing the experience of the city's residents. Two light-rail corridors in particular will serve development near the riverfront:

- A proposed light-rail corridor connecting downtown, the Southwest waterfront, Near Southeast, and Hill East/RFK stadium, will serve the most popular destinations along the Blue, Orange, and Green Lines, using an existing traffic lane on M Street, SE. This line could also dip south of M Street to connect to Buzzard Point.
- Another proposed light-rail line will serve M Street and cross the Anacostia on one of the reconstructed 11th Street Bridges to Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue in Historic Anacostia. This line will connect the Minnesota Avenue and Anacostia Metro stations via the decommissioned CSX Railroad Blue Plains spur, running up the eastern side of the Anacostia. If the spur's right-of-way is wide enough, a pedestrian trail will be developed connecting to the Riverwalk along this route. This light-rail line will serve primarily the east of the river neighborhoods and will be a key connector between the inter-modal Anacostia Metrorail and bus station, the Minnesota Avenue Metro station, and neighborhoods on the western side of the river.

Water Transportation

The NCP's Legacy Plan designated a major role for water transit. Proposed stops include the Southeast Federal Center, the Navy Yard, Anacostia Park, Poplar Point, Buzzard Point, and Washington Channel. The exact location of the water-taxi stops will be determined through more detailed analysis of origins and destinations.

The water-taxi concept fits beautifully into the vision of a vibrant, redeveloped waterfront and into Washington's strategies for getting commuters out of their cars and tourists out of their tour buses. The only cautionary note concerns the economics of implementing water-taxi service. Examples from other cities show that water taxis must be publicly assisted in order to succeed. Additionally, any development of a water-taxi system should conform to "Green Marina" principles and standards.



Using the River to Connect

These riverfront tourist/cultural sites could be connected by a water-taxi system. Water taxis in Vancouver (inset) serve both tourists and residents.

Extending Neighborhood Streets to the Waterfront

“People need places along the waterfront where they can live and visit unencumbered by cars.”

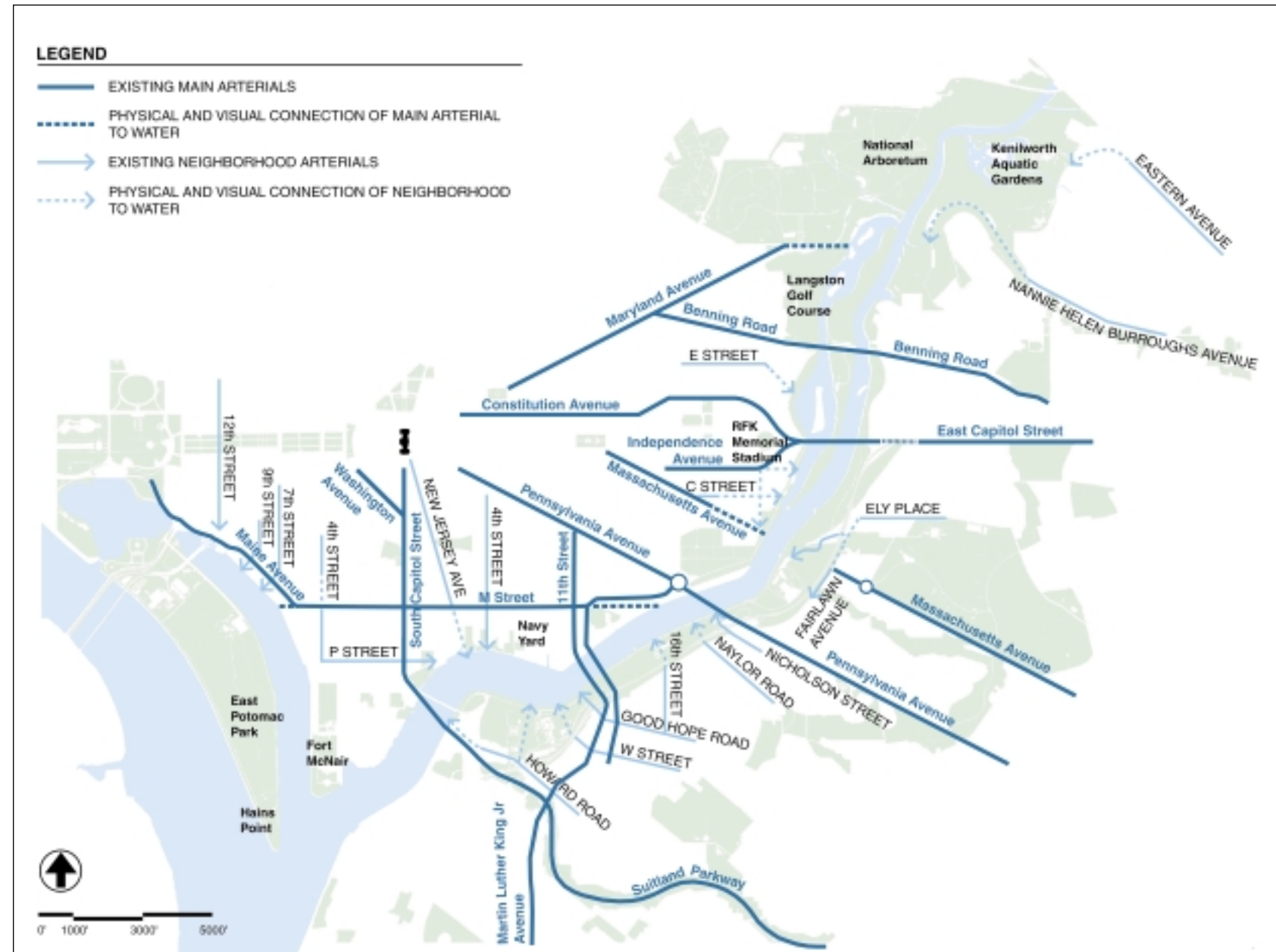
Connecting Cultural Assets to the River



The Anacostia Freeway at 16th Street, above. Below, improvements that could be implemented if the highway is lowered.



Site topography makes this the most logical location for extending streets and playing fields over a lowered Anacostia Highway.



Access to the Waterfront

Local streets, that should be considered primary local arterials to the water are in light blue. Light blue lines indicate where the street or access paths can be extended to reach the water or park system. Dark Blue lines indicate major boulevards that connect the neighborhoods.

Nearly all existing connections from neighborhoods to the river and its parks are minor, accidental, and inconvenient routes. Not all are safe. Few provide direct connections from existing landmarks, such as the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, or from routes that connect the Anacostia waterfront parks to other open-space systems within Washington, such as the Fort Circle Parks.

Any future work on existing bridges should be viewed as an opportunity to reconnect neighborhoods to the river and to provide safe and convenient access to neighborhoods and the RiverParks for residents and visitors alike. Lowering a portion of the Anacostia Freeway to allow local streets to pass over it, for example, would be a most effective solution. Existing streets can be extended across the freeway, either as streets with sidewalks or as pedestrian and bicycle ways, to create ideal gateways between the neighborhoods and the park system. Streets supporting automobile use could connect to the Park Road (See Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of the Park Road), from which motorists can reach parking areas. Pedestrian and bike routes could link into the Riverwalk and the local neighborhood street network.

Extended Streets

Howard Road

Howard Road runs beneath the Anacostia Freeway, connecting the Anacostia Metro station to Poplar Point. This road will become increasingly important as Poplar Point is redeveloped into a major park and cultural destination. It will become a primary gateway to Washington from the south and will serve as a primary entrance to Poplar Point and the RiverParks. Since the majority of privately held land on Poplar Point lies adjacent to Howard Road, the Howard Road Corridor is the likely area for any new private redevelopment associated with Poplar Point.

Howard Road currently crosses under the freeway. To create safer, more pleasant routes for pedestrians and local traffic, this road should cross above the freeway. The same holds true for all local roads that cross freeways. Wherever

this measure is not possible, improvements to cross streets – including lighting, streetscape and landscape improvements – will help them achieve the standards of park-to-neighborhood gateways. In the case of Howard Road, if the interchange of the Anacostia Freeway (I-295) (see Initiative Map, p.39) can be submerged, than Howard Road will be able to cross at grade. Otherwise, increasing side-walk width and development adjacent to the underpass will make this particular route safer and more pedestrian-friendly.

W Street

W Street provides the potential to connect the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site to the Anacostia Park via an overpass – either pedestrian or vehicular. (See Poplar Point Target Area description in Chapter 6 for more details).

Good Hope Road

The intersection of Good Hope Road and Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue marks the historic core of the Anacostia neighborhood. But the Anacostia Freeway and ramps serving the 11th Street Bridges separate this area from the river. Studies aimed at making this a safe, welcoming park-to-neighborhood conduit should be undertaken in conjunction with the design and development of the Anacostia Government Center.

16th Street and Naylor Road

Between Good Hope Road and Pennsylvania Avenue, the Anacostia Freeway runs for nearly a mile, with only one pedestrian overpass connecting schools and neighborhoods to Anacostia Park and its recreational fields and field houses. (See “Connecting Cultural Assets to the River.” page 44) Naylor Road, 16th Street, and several other streets in the neighborhood could, if extended over the Anacostia Freeway, establish better local connections to the park for pedestrians, cyclists, and residents with physical disabilities. Of all the sections of the Anacostia Freeway, this section near Naylor Road may be the most logical location for extending surface streets, parks, and playing fields over a lowered highway.

The following section, “Reclaiming Washington’s Great Urban Avenues,” addresses a similar extension of the larger-scale L’Enfant avenues to and across the river.

Making Places for Pedestrians and Cyclists

People need places along the waterfront where they can live and visit unencumbered by cars. They need pedestrian spaces from which to window shop and venture into stores; they need recreational settings; and they need casual places to gather and socialize. Places designed for pedestrians and cyclists are also accessible to personal vehicles, such as wheelchairs, used by people with disabilities.

Meeting the needs of pedestrians and cyclists achieves three AWI goals. First, pedestrian-friendly development creates the kind of places that people want to live in and visit. Second, pedestrian and cycle paths provide easy access from nearby neighborhoods to the assets of the waterfront. Third, such development offers commuters and visitors alternatives to cars.

The waterfront area, with its parks and underused land alongside river scenery, offers the perfect venue for pedestrian and bicycle trails. Designing and creating these trails, and connecting them to public transit, neighborhood commerce, and park and recreational offerings, will be among the most important endeavors of the District of Columbia and the National Park Service (a major waterfront landholder) in coming years. These achievements will also provide the city with its most potentially rewarding opportunities for partnership with the new private developments that choose to locate near the waterfront.

The RiverParks and Riverwalk will provide an extensive transportation and recreation network for pedestrians and cyclists. The AWI also recommends three additional pedestrian bridges and the reconstruction of three existing bridges – the Frederick Douglass and the two 11th Street bridges – to better accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. Also of great importance to these groups, especially to the residents of east-of-the-river neighborhoods, is the AWI proposal to reconnect neighborhood streets in Anacostia to the RiverPark by lowering a portion – or multiple small portions – of the Anacostia Freeway.

The Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail

The Riverwalk will attract new visitors to the waterfront, serve local residents and commuters with transportation options,

provide new riverfront recreational opportunities, and support neighborhood commerce with an infusion of new life and activity. The Riverwalk will connect diverse settings including neighborhoods, recreational facilities, urban parks, cultural sites, and commercial districts. It will also connect several modes of transportation by linking bicycle and walking paths to public transit and water-taxi stops. The Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail is central to the AWI’s alternative transportation strategy, and is described in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Standards for Riverwalk Trails

All future trails must provide facilities and amenities for cyclists and pedestrians, including benches, bicycle racks, and well-placed comfort stations. They must encompass connections to other trail and commuter-transit systems, including those under development, such as the new light-rail corridors. Designed and constructed according to the most environmentally sensitive standards, the Riverwalk will help achieve low-impact development goals among the river’s edge.

Standards for New Development

Some have expressed concern that the net result of extending the city grid to the waterfront (as well as the construction of trails and a park road along the waterfront) will result in an increase in impervious surfaces and transportation-generated pollution of the river. The AWI recommends that any new construction and development be implemented according to environmentally sensitive principles. Chapter 1 discusses Sustainable Development in more detail.

New development near the Anacostia and around the city must share the standards described above for pedestrian and bicycle facilities if the Riverwalk is to reach its full potential as a new transportation corridor for cyclists and walkers. A cyclist traveling via the Riverwalk to a shopping or business district must find bicycle racks or storage facilities at his or her point of arrival. New office developments should include shower facilities for workers who would like to bicycle or jog to work. New development will naturally be attracted to areas served by transit; consequently, WMATA, other city and federal agencies, and potential developers must cooperate closely.

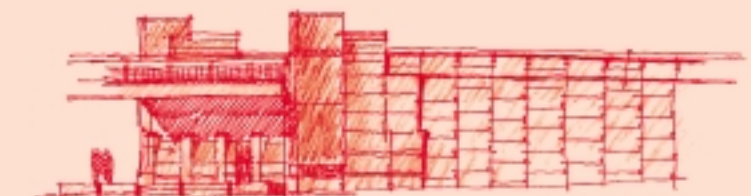
Making the Anacostia Freeway Like a Parkway



The Baltimore-Washington and Suitland parkways establish a precedent for urban highways, with landscaped medians and quality materials.



Use of low stone wall and grass medians on the Baltimore-Washington Parkway.



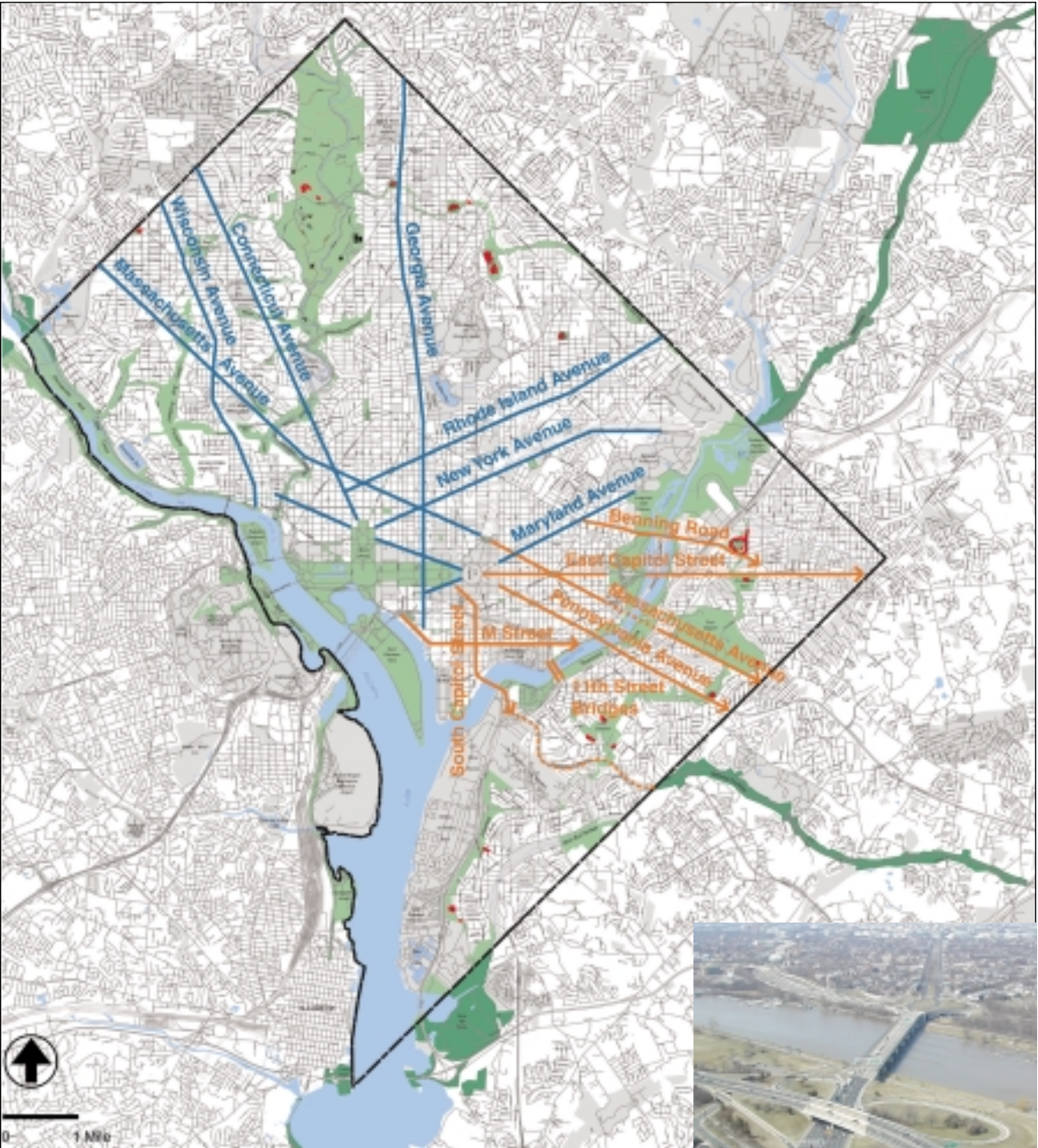
Ideas for typical Anacostia Parkway bridge materials and detailing.

All future work on the Anacostia Freeway should aim to reduce the barrier effect of the highway through street and landscape improvements. The Anacostia Freeway and Kenilworth Avenue can be transformed into the “Anacostia Parkway” through the application of new design standards:

- Improve pedestrian safety and access to the river from neighborhoods, particularly through underpasses and overpasses.
- Introduce a “parkway” character in all site elements and maintenance procedures.
- Lighting should reinforce the parkway character and improve safety under bridges.
- Preserve neighborhood character and scale in approach roads and access routes.
- Seek to improve way-finding for Anacostia RiverParks and cultural destinations through coordinated signage.
- Introduce architectural treatments in the tradition of Washington parkways for medians, curbs, gutters, and exit/entrance ramps.
- Bridge overpasses should incorporate “tower” elements, or a change of material at either end, to distinguish the crossing and correspond to the identity of the adjacent neighborhood.
- Adjoining local roads should be made more pedestrian-friendly through reductions in lane-widths or the number of lanes.
- Berms, plantings, and landscape treatments should be used to contain the sight, sound, and smell of the freeway.

Reclaiming Washington's Great Urban Avenues and Building Better River Crossings

"Bridges slated for imminent repair or replacement create excellent opportunities to revise the entire network of river crossings, and to better serve the disenfranchised pedestrian, cyclist, and local motorist."



Overcoming the Barrier
Few of Washington's great avenues cross the Anacostia. It's time to concentrate on the great avenues that run east, across the Anacostia River, such as South Capitol Street, 11th Street, Massachusetts Avenue, East Capitol Street, Benning Road, and Pennsylvania Avenue.



A quick look at a map reveals that the historic street pattern of L'Enfant's Washington did not cross the Anacostia intact. Of the many historic avenues crisscrossing Washington, for example, only three cross the Anacostia: South Capitol Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, and East Capitol Street. Benning Road, an extension of Florida Avenue, also crosses the river.

Because of the relative infrequency of bridges, and because of the disruptive effect of the Anacostia Freeway, the Southeast-Southwest Freeway, and rail corridors on either side of the river, all of these avenues have become highway-like and overloaded with traffic. They host wide interchanges, tangles of lanes and loops, and numerous overpasses. As a result, they have lost the stately quality of Washington's other grand avenues and any relationship to neighborhood life and commerce.

Highways Becoming Boulevards
Restoring the avenue-like character of these arterial roads, and restoring active commerce along them, will benefit communities along the Anacostia. More and better bridges will begin to alter the urban structure that isolates east-of-the-river neighborhoods by reconnecting them to Washington west of the Anacostia. Pedestrian-friendly avenues will enhance economic and urban design opportunities by creating shopping and business districts with the services and cultural life that high-speed, high-volume roadways prohibit.

In order to accomplish these goals, each of the existing crossings – South Capitol Street, 11th Street, East Capitol Street, Benning Road and Pennsylvania Avenue – must be rehabilitated. Each will require individual treatments, as described later in this chapter. However, a few universal principles of rehabilitation are described below:

- Regional traffic must be redirected off the avenues through a new tunnel under South Capitol Street, as described on the facing page under "River Crossings," and on pages 40-41.

- Slower, local traffic will support concentrations of neighborhood businesses.
- The new bridges should provide access to the riverfront for both cars and people.
- Zoning and design standards for buildings and streetscapes should echo Washington's urban character in density, setbacks, and quality.
- Landscape treatments should grace each avenue, with rows of trees evoking the monumental and gracious character of the city.
- Pedestrian amenities, such as benches, lighting, and paving, should emphasize pedestrian crossing zones and safety features.

In addition to the avenues mentioned, Massachusetts Avenue will be extended to the river through Public Reservation 13 to terminate in a landscaped traffic circle with a memorial. Near its terminus, Massachusetts Avenue will intersect the Park Road and Riverwalk, from which pedestrians and cyclists will have access to a new Massachusetts Avenue Bridge. (See page 54 for details).

River Crossings: The Existing Bridges
Seven bridges currently cross the river – an insufficient number given the density of the city and region. Most of the bridges are burdened by highway traffic. They do not conveniently conduct neighborhood traffic back and forth across the river, and they offer the pedestrian a harrowing experience.

- The Anacostia's seven bridges are:
- Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge (at South Capitol Street).
 - Two 11th Street Bridges (one of which crosses at 13th Street).
 - John Phillip Sousa Bridge (at Pennsylvania Avenue).
 - Whitney Young Memorial Bridge (at East Capitol Street).
 - Benning Road Bridge.
 - Route 50 Bridge (at New York Avenue).

1 Washington Channel at the potential site of East Potomac Park bridge...



...which could become a pedestrian bridge such as this floating pedestrian bridge in Portland, Oregon.



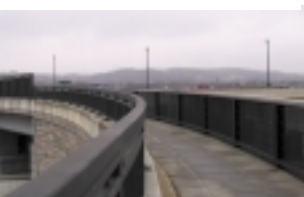
2 The Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge...



...could become a prominent gateway like Erasmus Bridge in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.



3 The pedestrian zone on the John Philip Sousa Bridge at Pennsylvania Avenue...



...could become the model for more pedestrian friendly bridges, such as this in Bilbao, Spain.



The Frederick Douglass Bridge carries roughly 70,000 vehicles a day – many making the connection from I-295 to I-395. The 11th Street Bridges also carry high volumes of high-speed interstate traffic and lack sidewalks, while the Frederick Douglass Bridge, with its sweeping highway arc and highway traffic, is also hazardous for pedestrians or cyclists, despite having sidewalks. All three of these bridges are slated for imminent repair or replacement. This creates excellent opportunities to revise the entire network of river crossings, and to better serve the disenfranchised pedestrian, cyclist, and local motorist.

River Crossings

The Possibilities

The existing bridges that cross the Anacostia River must be redesigned to serve as great works of urban infrastructure. Reducing the traffic load on existing bridges and avenues is critical for urban design improvements, park access, and economic growth in the area; indeed, for residents' quality of life.

A new South Capitol Street tunnel and dramatic increases in transit access are proposed to reduce the traffic burden on the bridges. With the tunnel in place, older bridges already in need of replacement, such as the Frederick Douglass Bridge and the 11th Street Bridges, can be rebuilt to better serve local traffic, pedestrians, and cyclists – all groups marginalized by the present scheme of high-capacity bridges. Redesigned bridges at these locations will connect neighborhoods to parks and riverfront development.

Riverwalk Bridges

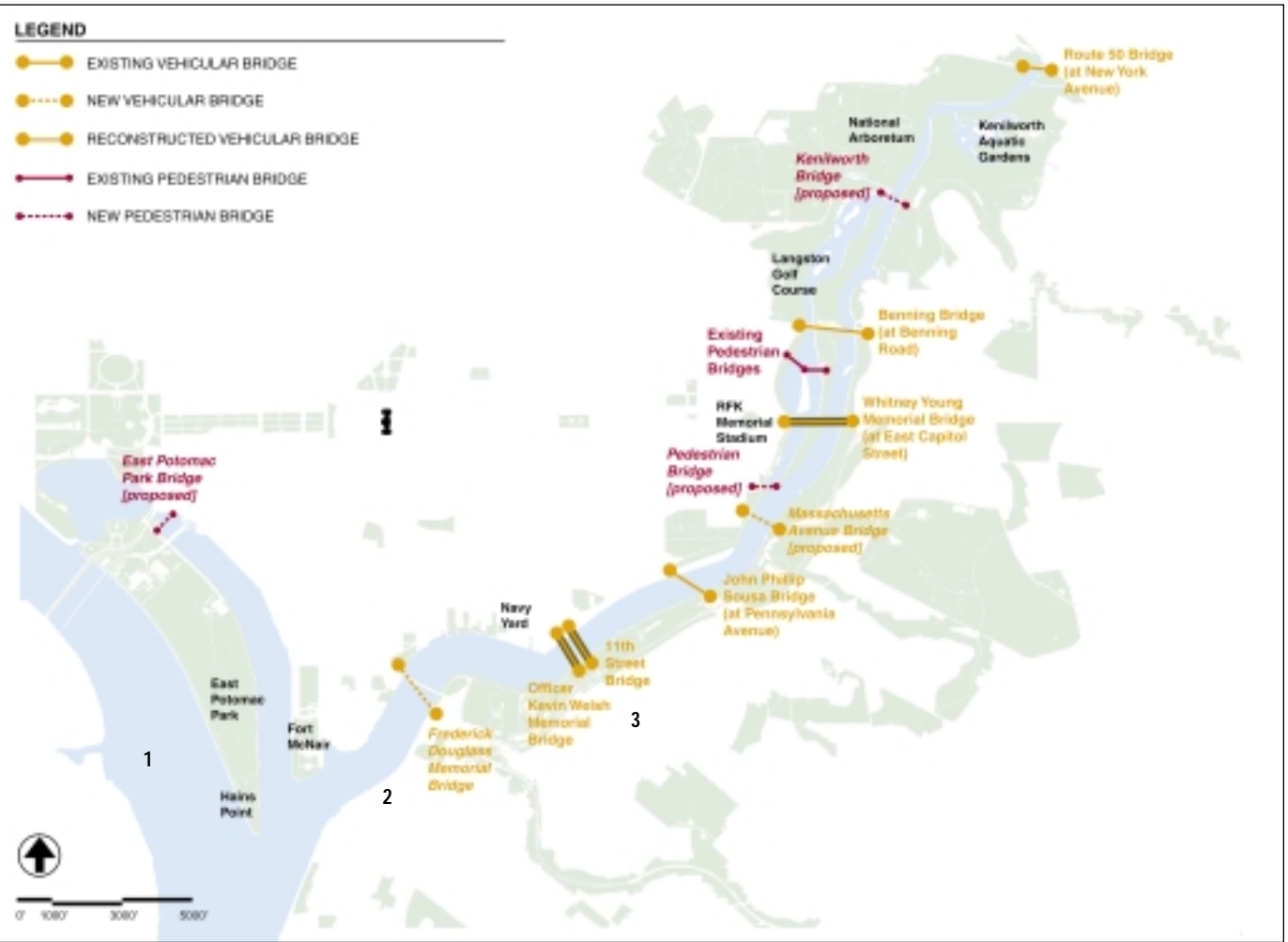
Three new Riverwalk bridges across the Anacostia are proposed, to provide increased connections to both sides of the waterfront.

- A new bridge is proposed across Massachusetts Avenue to serve pedestrians, cyclists, and official park vehicles.
- A second bridge, to serve pedestrians and cyclists only, is suggested for the northeastern tip of Kingman Island at the terminus of Maryland Avenue NE to connect Langston Golf Course and the National Arboretum to Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens.

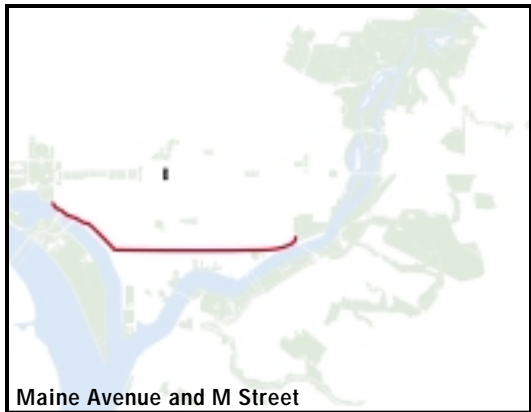
- A third pedestrian bridge is proposed across the Washington Channel, connecting Hains Point to the Southwest waterfront. This bridge will be located at the terminus of the channel near the new Mandarin Hotel.

The possibilities for new or reconstructed bridges are outlined below:

- A new South Capitol Street tunnel would pass under South Capitol Street and the Anacostia River, creating a direct connection between Interstate 395 (the Southeast-Southwest Freeway) and Interstate 295 (the Anacostia Freeway). The tunnel would also provide access to Buzzard Point and the Near Southeast.
- When the tunnel described above has been built, a new Frederick Douglass Bridge could serve pedestrians, cyclists, and local traffic.
- Relieved of regional traffic, the 11th Street Bridges could also be reconstructed with wide sidewalks and could serve local traffic. These bridges could connect to the Riverwalk trails.
- A new bridge at Massachusetts Avenue is proposed to serve pedestrians and cyclists, with limited park-related vehicular use. The bridge could support a future shuttle service (see Chapter Three) linking destinations along the Anacostia with transit and relieving the traffic congestion on park roads during peak-use periods. (See page 54 for details).
- A pedestrian-and-cyclist bridge near the National Arboretum, by the northern tip of Kingman Island, is proposed to connect to the Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens and related trails. This bridge also creates important access to recreation and to the Minnesota Avenue Metro station from the Carver Langston Neighborhoods.
- A pedestrian-and-cyclist bridge across the Washington Channel, between Hains Point and the Southwest waterfront, would increase the vibrancy of the neighborhood, linking the very popular East Potomac Park to many attractive maritime, recreational, cultural, shopping, and restaurant amenities in the Southwest.



Rebuilding the Anacostia Bridges
Five of the seven bridges are in need of repair or replacement in the years to come.



A New Maine Avenue and M Street Corridor

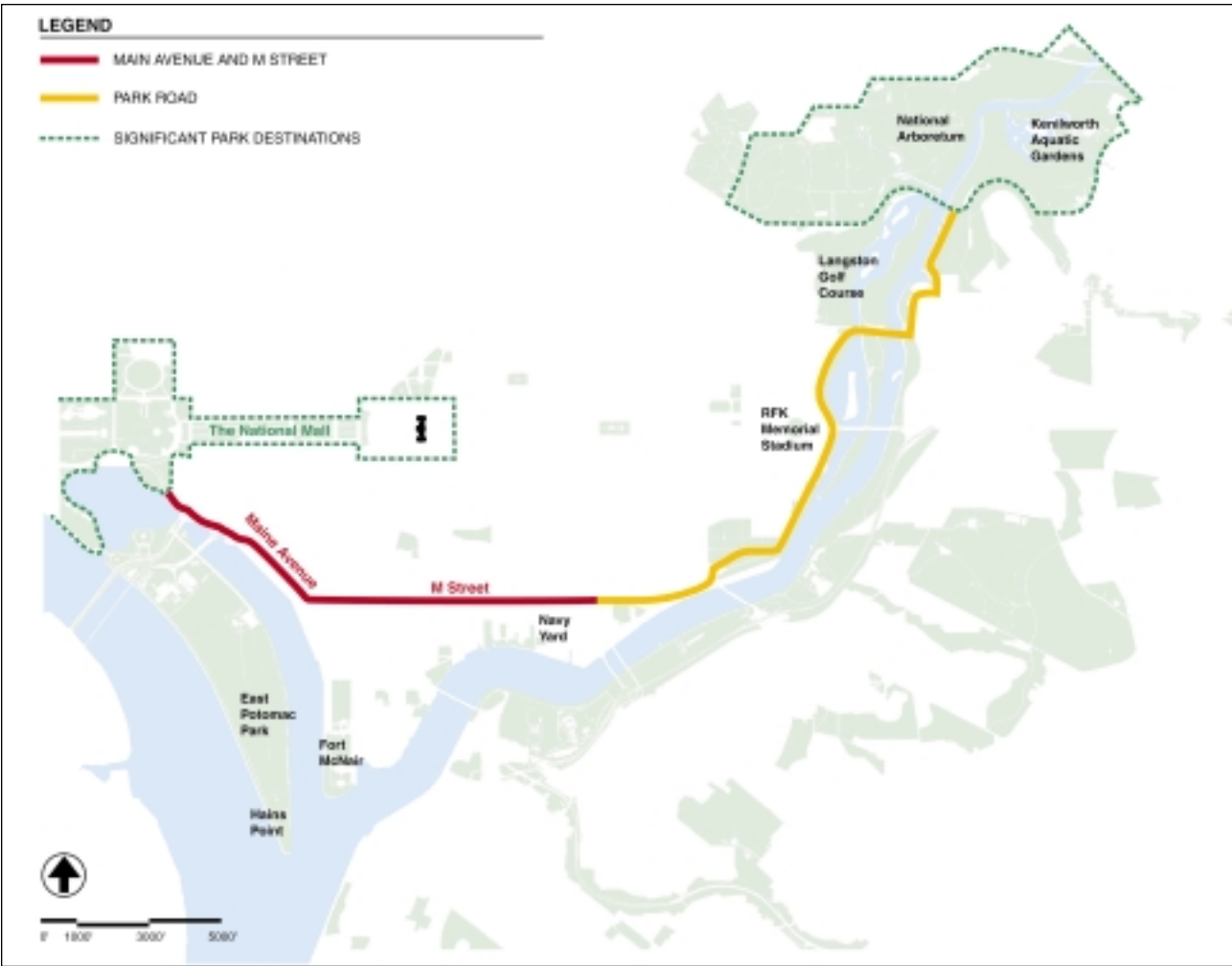
“Once the dividing line between residential neighborhoods and the isolated industrial and federal uses along the river, parts of M Street are now experiencing a renaissance.”

Removing Water Street



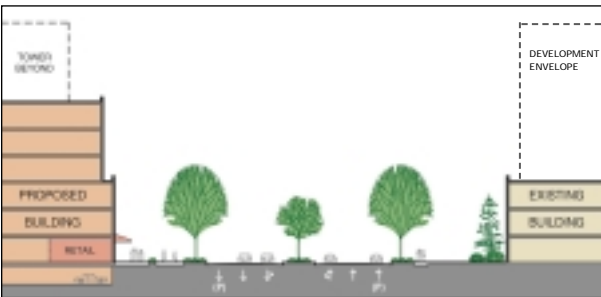
The Southwest waterfront today has a disproportionately high amount of paved surface compared to the existing quantity of open space and buildings. The excessive paved surfaces are primarily due to the redundancy of Water Street, an access road that runs along the water's edge parallel to Maine Avenue. The existing waterfront is isolated by vast amounts of surface parking, making it feel unsafe at night and unwelcoming during the winter. The removal of Water Street creates opportunities for new development that connects the rebuilt Maine Avenue to the waterfront:

- 1 L'Enfant Plaza Metro.
- 2 Monumental stairs to new public plaza on waterfront.
- 3 New public parking and transportation center below 10th Street Overlook.
- 4 New tour bus drop-off area under 10th Street Overlook.
- 5 Poposed light-rail line and stops along Seventh Street and Maine Avenue.
- 6 New bike lane on both sides of Maine Avenue.
- 7 Piers for tour-boat docking and water-taxi stops.
- 8 Continuous promenade along waterfront, uninterrupted from the Fish Wharf to civic park at M Street terminus.
- 9 New marina with additional boat slips.



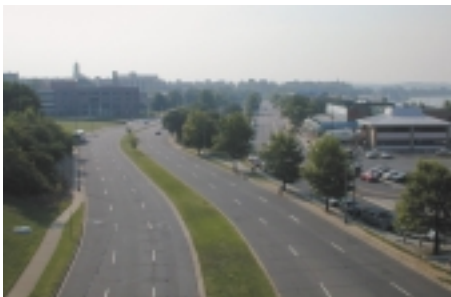
Connecting National Park Attractions

Maine Avenue and M Street, if extended east, will link the Arboretum, Kenilworth Gardens, and Anacostia RiverParks with the park system of the National Mall, and beyond.



A Gracious New Boulevard

Proposed streetscape improvements to Maine Avenue, including wider sidewalks and gracious landscaping to create a new urban boulevard.



Maine Avenue Today

A highway-like, pedestrian-unfriendly road.

Washington has long needed to connect its popular monumental core surrounding the Mall and the Tidal Basin to other nationally significant assets, such as Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens and the National Arboretum.

A clear linking of these national treasures can be achieved by connecting the Tidal Basin to the Anacostia River with improvements to Maine Avenue and M Street, SE. Further east from the Near Southeast, a new and comprehensive system of park roadways will clearly lead visitors to the Anacostia RiverParks and various destinations in the upper reaches of the river. Critical pieces of the system are currently under construction, with more in the planning stages, but several key connections must be made for such a route to become a clearly understood part of an urban parkway system.

A New Maine Avenue, SW

At the paved area of the Washington Channel waterfront, where Maine Avenue and Water Street are currently separated by a parking lot, lies an opportunity to create a superb new waterfront destination and to join the adjacent Southwest neighborhood to the water.

Maine Avenue will be rebuilt as a great urban boulevard, graciously landscaped with generous pedestrian amenities. In addition, current plans call for removing Water Street to create greater opportunities for new development and active public spaces. These plans suggest dividing the linear site into five building sites separated by public parks that create access to the waterfront from Maine Avenue. (See Chapter Six, pages 120-121 for further details).

Maine Avenue will continue to carry traffic in this area, but it will be slowed by traffic lights at one-block intervals, pedestrian crossings, and appropriate landscaping. Shops, services, residences, and cultural landmarks, such as the Fish Wharf and Arena Stage, will enliven its length.

M Street at the Southwest Waterfront, Meeting Maine Avenue

M Street leads directly to the Southwest waterfront, where it turns right to become Maine Avenue. The proposed improvements for this area will include a civic park at the terminus of M Street, where it joins Maine Avenue. The park will include a museum and a community facility sited around it. And the newly landscaped and rebuilt Maine Avenue, as it heads north along the waterfront to the monumental core, will gracefully extend the new M Street.

A New M Street, SE

M Street, SE is the one Washington street with the potential to connect the west bank of the Anacostia River to the Washington Channel and beyond, to the monumental core. A key east-west commercial corridor, it runs from the Washington Channel east towards the Near Southeast and the Navy Yard, ending at the 11th Street Bridges and the Washington Gas site.

Where it was once the dividing line between residential neighborhoods and the isolated industrial and federal uses along the river, parts of M Street are now experiencing a renaissance. The Navy Yard's regional consolidation over the last few years has generated new private office space construction on M Street. The new U.S. Department of Transportation headquarters will bring 7,000 more employees to the area, and the development of the 44-acre Southeast Federal Center will create housing and more commercial space.

In support of this investment, the city has made streetscape improvements, added bus services and is developing a new light-rail line. These changes to M Street bode well for its future as a vibrant commercial boulevard enhanced by excellent landscaping and design, and for the revitalization of the Near Southeast and the Anacostia waterfront in general.

Extending M Street to the East

Paralleling M Street, to the north runs the Southeast-Southwest Freeway. The freeway ends just past the 11th Street Bridges at Barney Circle, but since most traffic passes onto the 11th Street Bridges, the final segment of the freeway is underutilized. This segment could be adapted to form a beautiful park road extension of M Street that follows the river's course all the way to the National Arboretum. At Pennsylvania Avenue, the road will continue under Barney Circle, where it could join the park road system, reconnecting the disjointed neighborhood street network.

For the first time, motorists could reach the National Arboretum and Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens from the Mall and Southwest waterfront, via a waterfront route. Barney Circle could be revamped as a ceremonial gateway.

Narrowing the freeway will also allow neighborhood streets and pedestrian access to extend to the river when the CSX freight line is eventually relocated. (See page 56, "Addressing Tour Buses and the Freight Railroad of the City.") Alternatively, the railroad could be bridged at each street – a costly but worth-while project – providing residents with an immediate vision of what can be accomplished at the Anacostia waterfront.



The Southeast Freeway from 11th Street to Barney Circle today.

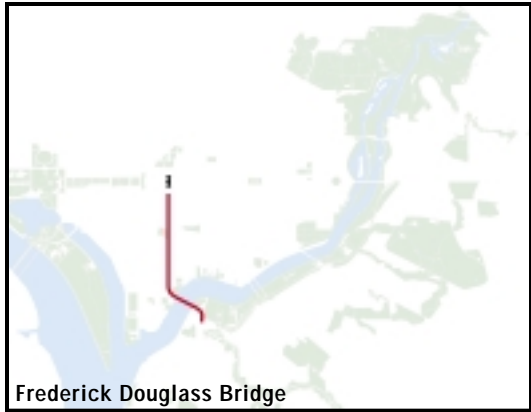


The Southeast Freeway

If the left-over stretch of the Southeast Freeway (I-395), shown above, is narrowed, it can serve as a green extension of M street and the gateway to the RiverParks beyond Barney Circle, as shown in the collage below.



The Narrowed Southeast Freeway Becomes a Park Road



Frederick Douglass Bridge and South Capitol Street

“With a new tunnel channeling regional traffic, South Capitol Street will regain the stately character of other handsome Washington avenues culminating in views of the Capitol.”

Current Alignment of the Frederick Douglass Bridge Through Poplar Point



A New Southern Gateway at South Capitol Street

Aerial diagram showing a proposed westward realignment of the Frederick Douglass Bridge. Such an alignment would enable greater flexibility in Poplar Point, minimize some of the areas dedicated to the highway ramps, and achieve a better connection between South Capitol Street and the Suitland Parkway.



The Frederick Douglass Bridge conveys nearly 70,000 vehicles a day on its five lanes. At 45 feet above the Anacostia River, it is higher than the limit required for recreational boats to pass underneath. The bridge was designed with a bascule section that rotates upward and away from the centerline of the river to provide clear passage for destroyer-class vessels to the Navy Yard.

Supplementing and Replacing the Frederick Douglass Bridge

Like other bridges over the Anacostia, the Frederick Douglass Bridge is part of an overloaded but incomplete road and highway system that combines local and regional traffic on complex routes. The Frederick Douglass Bridge serves as an indirect shortcut between the Anacostia Freeway (I-295) and the Southeast-Southwest Freeway (I-395) in down-town Washington. It is problematic for many reasons:

- It is poorly connected to the highways it serves, causing traffic congestion on both sides of the bridge.
- The indirect connection between highways confuses motorists and leads them astray, increasing congestion and pollution, clogging local roads, and impinging on neighborhood quality of life.
- Local traffic, which will increase with development, cannot use the bridge to reach waterfront destinations, as the bridge overshoots both waterfronts.
- The bridge is not designed for use by pedestrians or cyclists (although minimal sidewalks exist).

The bridge was built in 1967 and will need replacement within 10 years. To replace it, a direct, high-speed connection between the two highways is desirable. The AWI proposes that a new tunnel pass under the river to connect the Suitland Parkway and South Capitol Street to the Southeast-Southwest Freeway (I-395), accommodating highway traffic, and that a new Frederick Douglass Bridge be built for local traffic.

Construction Phasing

The construction of a new South Capitol Street crossing will be an 8-10 year process. Planners should make sure to complete the new crossing while the Frederick Douglass Bridge can still carry traffic. If the bridge cannot carry its traffic load during the construction of a new crossing, then its 70,000 cars a day will go to the other overloaded bridges crossing the Anacostia, and impassable bottlenecks will result. The 11th Street Bridges, for example, already carry 93,000 cars a day.

A new crossing should also be coordinated with WASA’s plan to build a new Poplar Point CSS Lift Station, which can be incorporated within the access shaft required for a new tunnel. (See Chapter One for further discussion of WASA’s Long-Term Control Plan).

The Result

The final result will be a high-speed tunnel connecting commuters from I-395 to I-295 and the Suitland Parkway, and a new Frederick Douglass Bridge designed for local traffic, with pedestrian amenities to restore both the ceremonial nature and the commercial vitality of South Capitol Street. The new bridge will include a generous connection for pedestrians and cyclists between two park systems as well as to the street network of Historic Anacostia and downtown Washington, D.C. This new crossing will enable South Capitol Street to realize its potential as one of Washington’s great boulevards.

Today's South Capitol Street

South Capitol Street, like Pennsylvania Avenue, is one of the few avenues that extend from the monumental core across the Anacostia River. However, its status as a ceremonial boulevard cannot be realized as long as it remains the highway connection between the Southeast-Southwest Freeway (I-395) and the Anacostia Freeway (I-295).

Every day, 54,000 cars (figure is for the segment of South Capitol Street that is North of M Street) speed down South Capitol Street. Over the years, the street has been modified to accommodate this heavy commuter traffic. It dips under M Street to avoid stopping cars at a traffic light, and its width makes pedestrian crossings difficult.

Despite these modifications, huge traffic back-ups occur daily on South Capitol Street and the Southeast-Southwest Freeway. These back-ups cause traffic to spill over to M Street and Maine Avenue, causing congestion in adjoining neighborhoods.

A New Gateway to the Capitol

With a new tunnel channeling regional traffic, South Capitol Street, freed of its interstate traffic burden and brought back to grade, will regain the stately character of other handsome Washington avenues culminating in views of the Capitol. It will support a vibrant pedestrian and commercial life, not only along South Capitol itself, but also along the portion of M Street that now overpasses it. Indeed, South Capitol Street can ultimately attain the Mall-like prominence envisioned for it in the National Capital Planning Commission's plan, "Extending the Legacy."



South Capitol Street stretches one and a half miles from the U.S. Capitol to the Anacostia River.



Today's South Capitol Street: A Highway Requiring Pedestrian Overpasses

South Capitol Street, like Pennsylvania Avenue, is one of the few avenues that extend from the monumental core to the Anacostia River, yet it fails to serve as a suitable monumental southern gateway to the Capitol of our nation. Visitors (and foreign dignitaries) use the Suitland Parkway and other southern routes to reach the city, and are greeted with a high-speed highway environment rather than a stately promenade to the Capitol.



A Pedestrian Friendly Boulevard

South Capitol Street as envisioned by the National Capital Planning Commission's Legacy Plan.

Precedents



© Alex MacLean

South Capitol extends for one and a half miles from the Frederick Douglass Bridge to the Capitol. This is approximately the same length as Commonwealth Avenue in Boston, from the Public Garden through the Back Bay. Commonwealth Avenue, and many other such grand boulevards, carry significant levels of traffic yet express a grand civic pride, and in many cases are lined with desirable residential, retail, and office uses. While South Capitol Street has many constraints, including a few rights-of-way and overhead crossings for railways and highways, its transformation is essential for the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative.



The Rhode Island State Capitol in Providence with recently made connections to the Providence River.



The bridge at 11th Street was the first to cross the Anacostia, connecting workers east of the river with the Navy Yard.

11th Street Bridges and Pennsylvania Avenue

“Formal plantings, pedestrian amenities, and monuments will announce the continuation of Pennsylvania Avenue across the river.”



Highway Bridges Become...

The 11th Street Bridges are currently high-speed highway bridges with no pedestrian or bike access. They serve regional commuter traffic instead of the Anacostia neighborhoods adjacent to them.



...Pedestrian Friendly Bridges

If the highway crossing is relocated to a tunnel under South Capitol Street, the 11th Street Bridges can be reconstructed as slower, narrower local bridges, with pedestrian access and bike lanes, as shown in the collage above. The park space between the bridges can become a symbolic gateway to the Anacostia community, with a new community center and monument site.

The 11th Street Bridges

The original 11th Street Bridge was the river's oldest crossing. It connected the Navy Yard to Uniontown, a suburb built across the river to attract workers to a more bucolic setting. Washingtonians crossed the bridge by carriage, horse, or on foot. Today, two 11th Street Bridges – one aligned with 13th Street – carry inbound and outbound traffic totaling 93,000 cars a day.

Long-term improvements to the 11th Street Bridges depend upon the interstate highway connection – a new tunnel under South Capitol Street – created between the Anacostia Freeway (I-295) and the Southeast-Southwest Freeway (I-395). Unless some of the 11th and 13th Street traffic can be shifted to the new tunnel (as discussed in the previous section) the 11th Street Bridges will remain highway-like in scale.

Additionally, the narrowing of the Southeast Freeway (between 11th Street and Barney Circle) to a park road will be required to allow for the transformation of the bridges (see page 49). Eventually, they can be rebuilt to better serve local traffic, including pedestrians and cyclists. The twin bridges are also the most likely candidates for the light-rail line connecting both sides of the river.

The current bridges are 40 years old, have no sidewalks, and are slated for imminent repair. With the appropriate sidewalks and ramps, the bridges can provide important pedestrian links within the RiverParks system via the new Riverwalk. Tied more rationally to the local street network, the new 11th Street Bridges can create new sites for community buildings, commercial development, and employment at either end; in other words, they can establish a more direct relationship between neighborhoods east and west of the river.

Pennsylvania Avenue

As it crosses the Anacostia River at the John Phillip Sousa Bridge, Pennsylvania Avenue, far from its ceremonial prominence between the White House and the Capitol, takes on the character of an overloaded traffic artery in Southeast. It retains this character all the way to Minnesota Avenue, as it provides freeway access for commuters leaving and entering Washington from Maryland. Its traffic load – 31,000 cars daily – requires multiple turning lanes and large, signalized intersections; these are inadequate attempts to solve regional traffic issues on a city street.

As with other bridges and avenues, Pennsylvania Avenue will also benefit from the proposed new tunnel under South Capitol Street in the vicinity of the Frederick Douglass Bridge. This route and adjacent neighborhoods will be well served by the lowering of the Anacostia Freeway at Pennsylvania Avenue, which will allow a ceremonial traffic circle and links between neighborhood commercial centers and the waterfront. This is one of the most significant commercial redevelopment opportunities on the eastern bank of the river.

On an elevated interchange, Pennsylvania Avenue can take a more urban form, such as a landscaped traffic circle graced by a memorial – an appropriate solution for a stately avenue. A connection for motorists between Pennsylvania Avenue and the northbound lanes of the Anacostia Freeway will improve traffic circulation. New ramps must also provide access to the waterfront for motorists, pedestrians, and those using alternative transportation along Pennsylvania Avenue.

The goal is to create a boulevard that serves as a neighborhood commercial corridor. Formal plantings, pedestrian amenities, and monuments appropriate to Pennsylvania Avenue's origin in the monumental core will announce the continuation of Pennsylvania Avenue across the river. Once again, slower traffic and government investment in this route will help foster broader reinvestment and new neighborhood business opportunities.

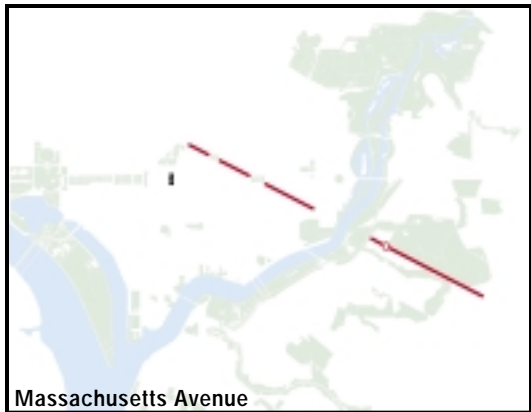


A Highway Interchange Yields...

The current interchange of Pennsylvania Avenue and the Anacostia Freeway is still highway-like and difficult to cross. Although Pennsylvania Avenue has been reconstructed to include bike lanes and pedestrian access, the bridge is still very wide and speeds are very high, preventing local businesses from locating along the corridor.

...A Monumental Opportunity

A new traffic interchange to depress the through-traffic on I-295 below grade, and manage the local traffic at grade might allow for a new monument site on the south side of the Anacostia. It also allows for vital new businesses with access directly off the street and pedestrian friendly sidewalks and streetscape.



Massachusetts Avenue

What if... the CSX railroad is relocated?

What if the CSX railroad is relocated out of the city, allowing Massachusetts Avenue to continue as a city street across the river?

If the railroad is relocated, a stunning new treatment of Massachusetts Avenue will become possible. The current proposal terminates Massachusetts Avenue at the waterfront with a small park road connection into the Anacostia RiverParks and across the CSX railroad tracks.

Instead, Massachusetts Avenue can continue straight across on axis to create a more monumental bridge and a new Anacostia River landmark. Local traffic will use Massachusetts Avenue to reach many destinations that now require driving a segment of the Anacostia Freeway. Freeway traffic will be reduced, and local drivers will have more connections to their neighborhoods.

Furthermore, if the new Massachusetts Avenue bridge were low like the current rail bridge, it would prevent the passage of larger watercraft. This will further the AWI's goals: limiting the upper reaches of the river to more passive uses and preserving habitat integrity.



The current configuration of Massachusetts Avenue. The avenue is cut off on the west side when it hits 19th Street, and on the east side at the CSX railroad tracks.



Taft Bridge in Rock Creek Park.

Massachusetts Avenue

“East Capitol Street can become a more useful and attractive conduit between the Anacostia waterfront, the RFK Stadium area, and the rest of Washington.”

Massachusetts Avenue and a New Pedestrian Bridge

Due in part to the historical location of the D.C. General Hospital and the District Jail at Reservation 13, Massachusetts Avenue has long terminated at 19th Street. A preliminary study of this area, now referred to as the Hill East waterfront, recommends extending a neighborhood-scale street grid to the Anacostia River and creating a vibrant, mixed-use waterfront neighborhood. (See Chapter Six for a more detailed discussion of the Hill East waterfront target area).

Massachusetts Avenue will provide a vital lifeline to this new mixed-use development, the success of which depends on strong connections to the rest of the city. The extension of Massachusetts Avenue across the river via a park road bridge can provide an excellent pedestrian and bicycle route between parks and neighborhoods on both sides of the river.

According to the Hill East plan, Massachusetts Avenue will extend through the site to end in a traffic circle at the waterfront, connecting to the RiverParks park road system. The circle and the monument site that graces it will create a stately transition from an urban to a park setting. From there, travelers along the Riverwalk or the park road will have the option of heading southwest toward the Near Southeast neighborhood and more urban portions of the waterfront, northeast toward the upper reaches of the Anacostia, or across the river on the new Massachusetts Avenue park road bridge.

The proposed Massachusetts Avenue park road bridge, connected only to the RiverParks park road and the Riverwalk, and not to local streets (thus preventing regional traffic from using the bridge as a shortcut), will create a much-needed new connection across the river for pedestrians and cyclists who seek to travel through the RiverParks.

See “What if... the CSX railroad is relocated” for an alternative treatment of a new bridge at Massachusetts Avenue.



Massachusetts Avenue on the east side of the river. The railroad tracks and the Anacostia Freeway prevent it from reaching the river.



Bringing Massachusetts Avenue to the River

The Reservation 13 target-area plan shows the proposed extension of Massachusetts Avenue to the Anacostia River. Here pedestrians, bikers, and drivers would be able to connect to the Park Road system to access parks to the north and south along the river, or cross a new bridge to a new fitness center and parks on the east side of the river. Travelers on Massachusetts Avenue from the east side will also be able to access the park road network, by passing under the Anacostia Freeway (I-295) and onto Anacostia Park Drive as it crosses the railroad to become the new bridge.



Proposed Massachusetts Avenue bridge crossing as a narrow park road, not a literal extension of Massachusetts Avenue.

East Capitol Street and Benning Road

The Existing East Capitol Street

East Capitol Street is a major east-west arterial roadway with an unusual array of connections and design features near the Anacostia River. It begins at the U.S. Capitol and runs east to become the primary means of access to RFK Stadium. Independence and Constitution Avenues, along with smaller roads, merge into East Capitol Street shortly before crossing the Whitney Young Bridge.

After crossing the Whitney Young Bridge, East Capitol Street passes under Kenilworth Avenue, the CSX railroad tracks, 35th Street, and Minnesota Avenue before becoming a surface road again. Despite its design as a high-speed roadway at this point, it lacks full connections to the Anacostia Freeway. Also, its alignment with the freeway and railroad tracks consumes 20 acres of land.

Improving East Capitol Street

As planning for the RFK Stadium grounds and Reservation 13/Hill East waterfront proceeds, roadway alignments in the RFK Stadium area are also being examined to reduce traffic speed for safer, quieter neighborhoods. In addition, connections to the Park Road and Riverwalk will be introduced. East Capitol Street, in particular, will be modified in the following ways to become a more useful and attractive conduit between the Anacostia waterfront, the RFK Stadium area, and the rest of Washington:

- The design of East Capitol Street should maintain its capacity but aim to reduce traffic speeds. The parkways linked to Memorial Bridge on either side of the Potomac can be a model for this redesign.
- The alignment of East Capitol Street ramps and railroad tracks should be changed to consume less land. At the same time, the interchange can be redesigned to allow more turning options.



East Capitol Street today.



Memorial Bridge.

Benning Road

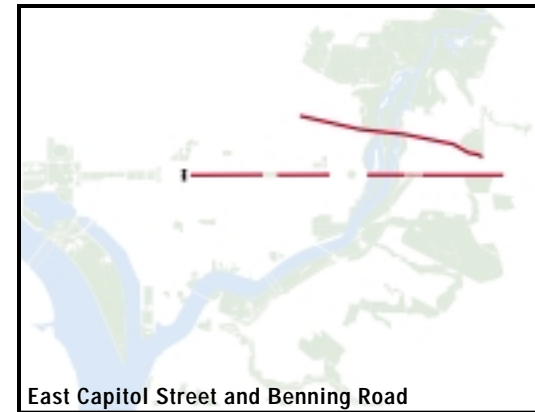
Benning Road, a large arterial road, connects the major commercial corridors of Florida Avenue and H Street to the Anacostia Freeway. Near the river, Benning Road provides access to Langston Golf Course, Kingman Island, and the northern parking lots of RFK Stadium.

East of the river, Benning Road provides access to the River Terrace and Mayfair Parkside neighborhoods. It crosses the Anacostia Freeway as the Freeway becomes Kenilworth Avenue, then intersects Minnesota Avenue. Benning Road's interchange with the freeway is severely constrained by adjacent development and the CSX railroad tracks, providing limited turning options for motorists. Motorists cannot head east on Benning Road from the Anacostia Freeway, or vice versa. In addition, the ramps carry limited capacity with inadequate safety provisions.

Improving Benning Road

The Benning Road Bridge is currently under reconstruction. The new bridge will include generous sidewalks to accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. In addition, it will provide connections to the RiverParks on both sides of the river and to Kingman Island. The following actions are recommended:

- Redesign and enrich the streetscape through street trees and other plantings, public art, high design standards, and pedestrian amenities.
- Provide safe intersections from Benning Road into the adjacent neighborhoods.
- Improve access to RFK Stadium from Benning Road, and to special events in RFK parking lots.
- Study further revisions for the freeway interchange to improve capacity and safety and, if possible, to complete the range of turning options for motorists.



East Capitol Street and Benning Road



A Reconstructed Benning Bridge

A sketch showing the existing Benning Bridge that would serve as the main Riverwalk crossing in the river's upper reaches. It would also serve as the main park road crossing, with access to Kingman Island.

Addressing Tour Buses and the Freight Railroad

“All efforts should be made to avoid unnecessary tour bus impacts on waterfront neighborhoods.”



Finding Sites for Tour Bus Staging

Potential sites for tour bus parking within easy driving distance of major monuments and memorials. Drivers need nearby services during waiting periods.

Tour Buses

As new cultural sites along the Anacostia River increase tour bus activity, two strategies will spare residents the inconvenience and fumes associated with these buses. The first strategy calls for convenient alternative modes of transportation for tourists, including Metro, light rail, water taxis, and the Riverwalk. The second strategy will create tour bus parking that is convenient for drivers and tourists, thus keeping buses out of the neighborhoods. Sites being considered for tour bus parking include RFK Stadium, Buzzard Point, and areas below the Southeast Expressway.

The 1999 task force report by the District Department of Transportation, “Transportation and Economic Development in the District of Columbia,” suggests that drivers use beepers to schedule pick-ups of their groups, minimizing idling time and driver inconvenience. Maps and other literature that clearly show loading and pick-up areas, and clearly state District of Columbia bus policies, will also be helpful. Additionally, requiring that tour buses be fueled with natural gas or low-emission fuel will help reduce emissions in neighborhoods. All efforts should be made to avoid unnecessary tour bus impacts on waterfront neighborhoods.

Car Parking

No additional parking should be added at the water’s edge. Regional visitors to Washington should be encouraged to park in suburban park-and-ride facilities and connect with the Metro there. Automobile access to the RiverParks will be addressed through the provision of limited parking in lots along the park road. Some structured parking already exists or is planned; car access to the Southwest waterfront will be accommodated by the additional parking planned under the 10th Street Overlook. In addition, structured parking already exists at the Anacostia Metro station next to Poplar Point.

New development near the waterfront will be expected to share parking for its own uses and other destination park activities. Furthermore, developers of office space will

be asked to make their weekday parking available to the public on weekends to serve special events and weekend visitors to the waterfront, thus reducing the need for single-purpose surface parking.

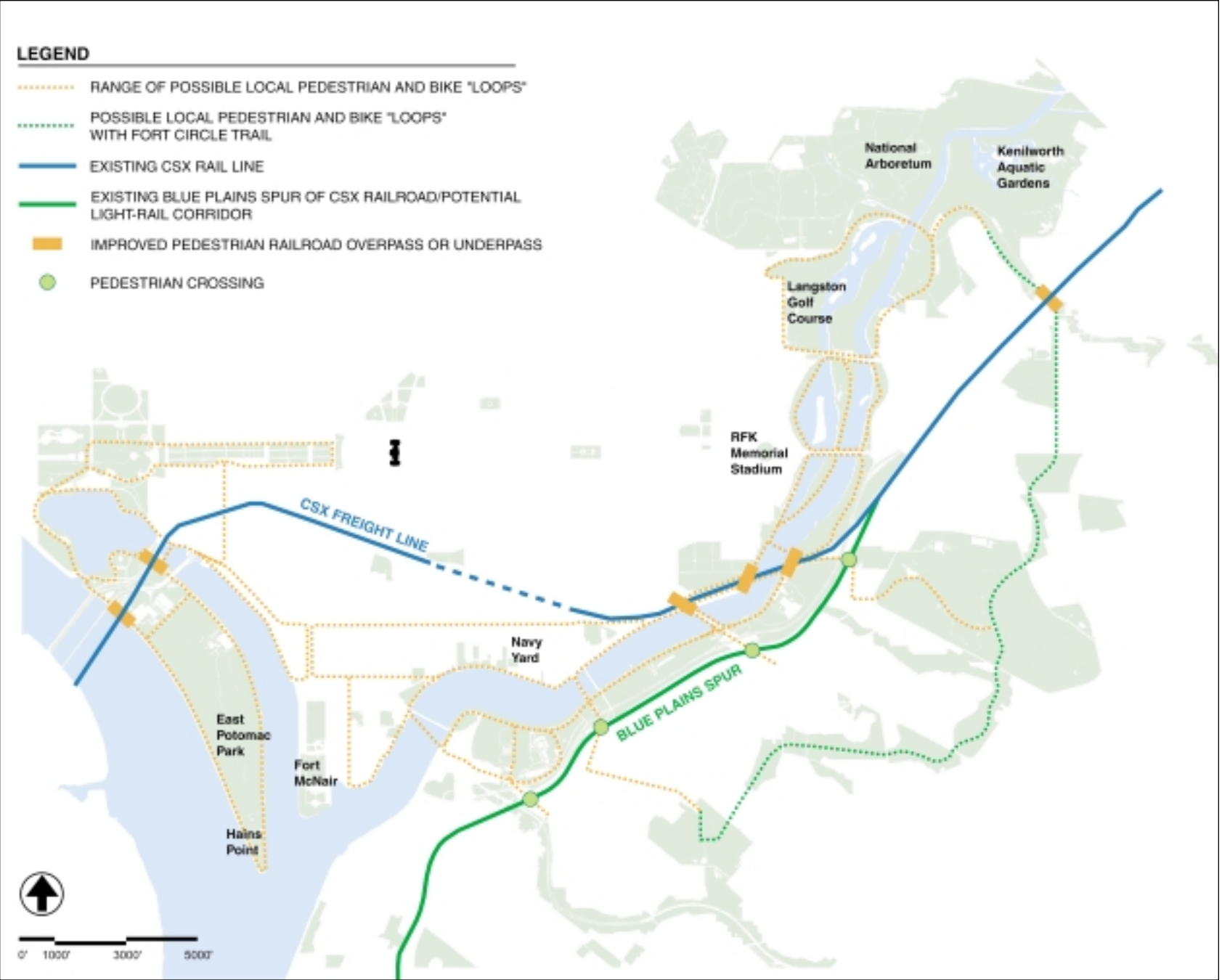
Long-Term Options for the Railroad Corridors

Two railroad corridors divide the river corridor and isolate parklands. The first is the CSX main line that crosses the river just north of Pennsylvania Avenue and the John Phillip Sousa Bridge.

The Legacy Plan of the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) recommends that the main line be relocated, providing a valuable corridor for alternative modes of local transportation, eliminating substantial barriers to the river, and opening up potential development sites.

The CSX railroad bridge as it currently spans across the Anacostia River is extremely low, preventing the passage of any boat larger than a canoe or dinghy. Should the mainline be relocated, a new bridge at Massachusetts Avenue can also be designed to emphasize the natural character of the upper reaches of the river, in contrast with its urban lower reaches.

The CSX Blue Plains spur line parallels the Anacostia Freeway and the entire length of the eastern bank of the Anacostia River. Trains travel this line approximately once per month, and it will be abandoned in the near term. The abandoned right of way can then be put to uses that serve the neighborhoods. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) hopes to locate its first light-rail service along this corridor. If the right of way will also accommodate a trail, this will connect to the Riverwalk, the Fort Circle Trails, and others. The Rails-to-Trails idea has been implemented throughout the United States with great success because of the compatibility of the routes with trail systems, waterfronts, and metropolitan areas.



Crossing the Tracks: Getting from one River Park to Another
The new improved pedestrian railroad overpasses and underpasses (indicated by the orange rectangles in the plan above) would decrease the degree to which the tracks isolate one river park from another.

Rails-to-Trails



A possible solution for adding a bike and pedestrian trail alongside the existing CSX tracks.



Raleigh Rail Trail.

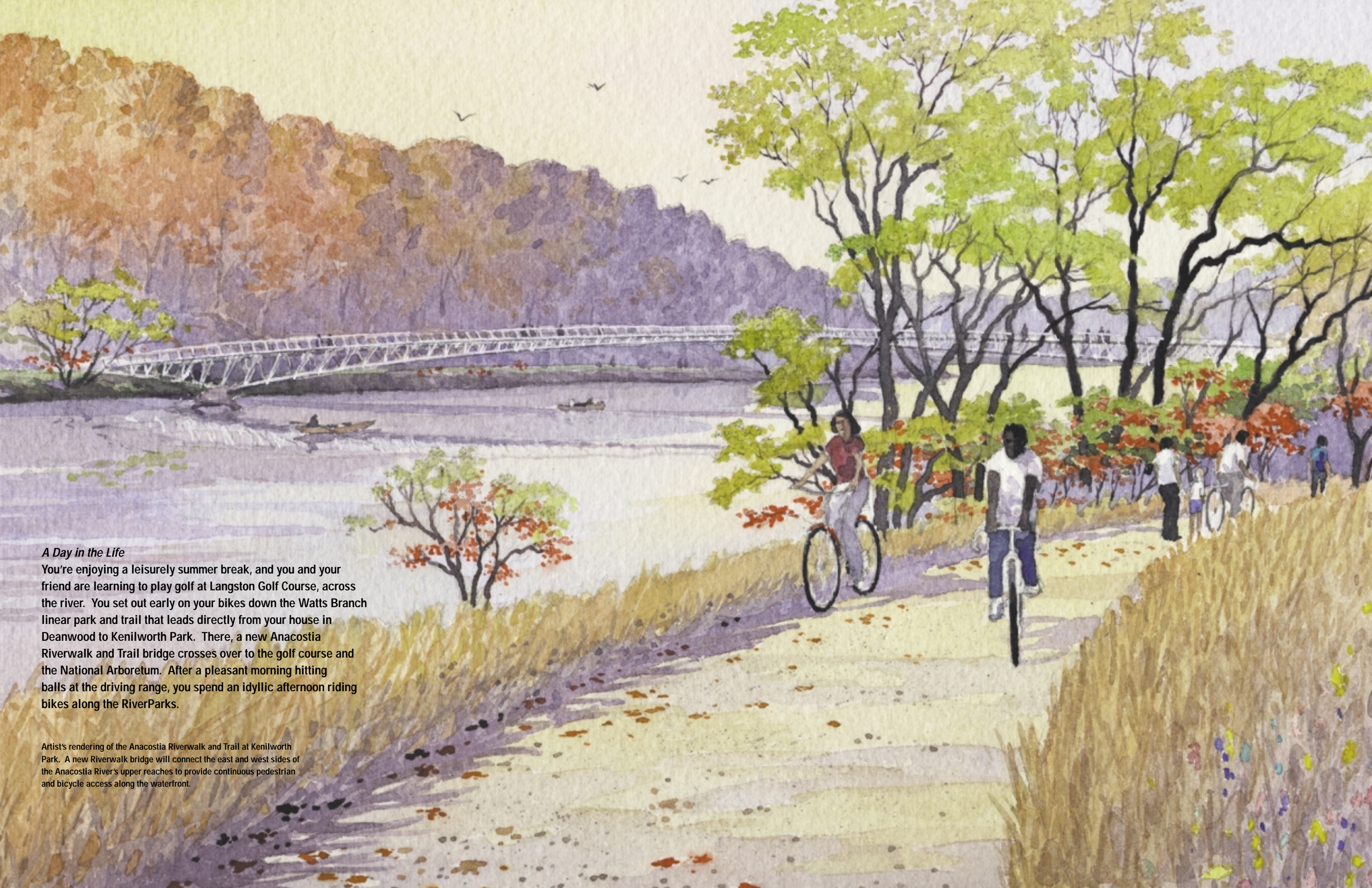
Rails With Trails Along the Blue Plains Spur
Every day thousands of Americans safely use and enjoy trails located along active rail lines. Currently over 60 trails share rights of way with active railways, ranging from busy freight routes to light-rail lines and less-used industrial rail tracks.

Despite fears that such trails expose users to greater risks, trails alongside railways appear to be just as safe as any other trail system*, possibly much safer than comparable trails near active roadways. And restricting pedestrian crossings to existing crossings of the railway means that no new liability need be incurred by the addition of a parallel trail system.

Trail design varies according to location. Many trails are separated by distance or fencing from active rail lines. In a survey conducted in 1999 by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 71 percent of all such facilities were separated from active rail lines by fencing or some other barrier system. While 30 percent of trails were separated from tracks by 21-50 feet, nearly 25 percent of trails – particularly newer trails – have been built with less than 12 feet of separation from active rail lines. Nearly 20 percent of such trails have been built alongside mass transit and light-rail lines.

Locating a multi-use trail next to new light-rail lines along the Blue Plains Spur will require nearly 60 feet of right of way. The width of the existing spur varies by location, but significant sections are wide enough to accommodate a trail. Sharing this valuable right of way for both mass transit and recreation is a goal worthy of further study.

*Source: Rails-to-Trails Conservancy



A Day in the Life

You're enjoying a leisurely summer break, and you and your friend are learning to play golf at Langston Golf Course, across the river. You set out early on your bikes down the Watts Branch linear park and trail that leads directly from your house in Deanwood to Kenilworth Park. There, a new Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail bridge crosses over to the golf course and the National Arboretum. After a pleasant morning hitting balls at the driving range, you spend an idyllic afternoon riding bikes along the RiverParks.

Artist's rendering of the Anacostia Riverwalk and Trail at Kenilworth Park. A new Riverwalk bridge will connect the east and west sides of the Anacostia River's upper reaches to provide continuous pedestrian and bicycle access along the waterfront.